

# Racist ways die hard at Lawmen's retreat

## Annual 'Good O' Boys Roundup' cited as evidence of 'Klan Attitude' at ATF

From THE WASHINGTON TIMES July 11, 1995 Front Page

Transcribed under fair use

By Jerry Seper, The Washington Times

OCOEE, Tenn

They're trying to tone down the racist trappings of the "Good O' Boys Roundup" here in the Tennessee hills east of Chattanooga, where hundreds of federal, state and local law enforcement officers gather every spring to let off steam.

There was a lot to tone down. Gone, for example, are many of the crude signs that once greeted arriving officers, like this one: **"Nigger check point."**

The "Good O' Boys Roundup" is organized by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and it was held this year on May 18-20.

Also gone this year was the traditional Saturday-night skit highlighting the "Good O' Boys steak dinner." In one skit, an officer in fake Ku Klux Klan garb pulled a dildo from his robe and pretended to sodomize another officer, who was in blackface.

But according to law enforcement officers who attended this year's and other events, a whites-only police remains in effect.

Still on sale were T-shirts with Martin Luther King Jr.'s face behind a target, O.J. Simpson in a hangman's noose and white D.C. police officers with a black man sprawled across the hood of their car under the words "Boyz on the Hood."

"Nigger hunting licenses" also were available throughout the compound, consisting of motor homes, trailers, tents and pickups gathered around a large beer truck.

At this year's event, some black officers -- including ATF agents -- attempted to crash the party and were turned away after having "bitter words" with some of the white officers in attendance, the officers said.

An attempt by roundup organizers to tone down the event's racist activities comes at a time when black agents have charged ATF with discrimination. In a lawsuit pending in U.S. District Court in Washington, they claim ATF supervisors have done little to address complaints of racial slurs, harassment and other job discrimination.

Brought by 15 plaintiffs, the suit alleges that such incidents as "nigger hunting licenses" seen in ATF offices, a Ku Klux Klan card posted in ARF's Oklahoma City office and use of the word "nigger" by white ATF officials have gone unpunished. There are about 200 blacks among the 2,000 agents within the ATF, a law enforcement arm of the Treasury Department.

Representing the black agents is lawyer David J. Shaffer of Washington. He said that his clients were aware of the Good O' Boys Roundup and that discovery in the case found that announcements concerning it had been circulated by and to white agents.

"This is what the lawsuit is about: a Ku Klux Klan attitude among some of the white agents that seriously affects black agents on a day-to-day basis." Mr. Shaffer said.

Trial in the case has been tentatively set for next year before U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth.

The roundup, according to invitations sent out last year, has been coordinated unofficially for the past several years through the ATF office in Greenville, S.C., and is open to "any good o' boy invited to attend." Non-law-enforcement attendees must be sponsored and accompanied by law enforcement officers, and participants wear wristbands to verify that they were invited.

The event coordinator is Gene Rightmyer, a retired ATF agent who previously was assigned to field offices in Tennessee and South Carolina. Mr. Rightmyer did not return telephone messages left for him with ATF to comment.

Roundup invitations show that participants were asked to send their registration fees -- ranging from \$70 to \$90 - to the Greenville ATF office, and the office's telephone number was listed for any question concerning the event.

Todd Lockhart, acting agent in charge of the Greenville office, declined comment, referring inquiries to the ATF regional office in Charlotte, N.C.

Several ATF agents in Greenville, however, were aware of the roundup, and during interviews they expressed concern and dismay over the annual event.

"I have never attended, nor would I," said one agent, adding that he and others knew about the racist activities and felt the event reflected poorly on the agency.

"I am not surprised about the signs or the other activities, and whether the racism is overt or subtle, it is wrong," said another ATF official. "I cringe on behalf of the agency."

None of the several Greenville agents interviewed volunteered that they had ever attended the event.

Earl Woodham, ATF spokesman in Charlotte, said he was aware of the annual roundup and had been invited on one occasion to attend but declined. He noted that the event was not sanctioned or authorized by the ATF.

"The ATF does not and will not tolerate any kind of discrimination," he said. "But what people do on their own time is their business; we cannot control internal morality."

Mr. Woodham said, however, that Mr. Rightmyer used "poor judgement" in using the ATF address and telephone number in his invitation. He said if Mr. Rightmyer were still employed by the agency, he would be subject to "a full review and possible sanctions."

He also suggested that ATF officials who attended the annual event were "a lot of the older agents, spinoffs from the days of the revenueurs and moonshine chasers."

"The younger agents just don't have time for this kind of activity," he said.

ATF spokesman Jack Killorin in Washington did not return calls for comment.

The roundup was organized in 1980 by ATF agents in Chattanooga and Knoxville. It began with 58 persons, mostly ATF agents, from Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky and North Carolina. Roundup attendance jumped to 341 last year.

According to Mr. Rightmyer's invitation, there are a few rules. Among those listed were no fighting, no fireworks and "what goes on at the roundup stays here."

Jeff Randall, a former Attalla, Ala. policeman who attended this year's event, said that while he would not "condemn" the entire group, there was "an obvious racist overtone" by many of those in attendance.

"People can gather and have fun, and there was a lot of good, clean fun available," he said. "But the



obviously racist stuff was just not acceptable."

Mr. Randall also confirmed seeing black agents at this year's event being turned away, saying that some of the program participants were "real mad" that they had tried to get into the compound.

A former Alabama police official who asked not to be identified said entrance to the roundup has in the past been tightly controlled along a one-lane dirt road. He said he personally saw and photographed racially inflammatory signs along that road.

The former police official, who said he attended three of the roundups, said the majority of the participants identified themselves as ATF agents. "The roundup has been a place for law enforcement personnel to go and let their hair down," he said. "But some of this overt racism is just inappropriate, plain and simple."

J.T. Lemons, owner of Grumpy's whitewater Rafting here, whose company sponsored rafting trips at the roundup, said that organizers have "done what they can over the past few years to clean up the racism" and that some overt signs were ordered taken down.

Mr. Lemons confirmed, however, that racially sensitive T-shirts "and other stuff" remained on sale.

Other business owners in this Polk County, Tenn. community -- east of Chattanooga, adjacent to the Cherokee National Forest -- also confirmed they had seen the signs, T-shirts and other racist trappings but declined to be quoted on the record.

---

## THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Wednesday, April 3, 1996

Treasury bans role in "Ol' Boys Roundups' Its law officers are barred from the "Good Ol' Boys" events, scene of racist conduct. 31 are investigated.

By Marcy Gordon (AP)

WASHINGTON -- The Treasury Department, reacting to the fallout from the annual "Good Ol' Boys Roundups" that have included racist behavior, yesterday barred its 19,500 law-enforcement officers from attending future Roundups and adopted guidelines for officers' off-duty behavior.

Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin also referred 31 agents for further inquiry or possible discipline for participating in the Roundups.

Treasury officials said they were instituting rules to prohibit "off-duty manifestations of racial and other forms of bias." The gatherings for law-enforcement officers at a southeastern Tennessee campground, held for the last 16 years, turned in recent years into marathon drinking bouts where women feared for their safety and some participants engaged in racist conduct.

Reviews by inspectors general at the Treasury and the Justice Departments found that over the 16 years, 45 Justice employees and 120 to 200 Treasury workers attended the Roundups.

The reviews found no evidence that the Treasury or Justice employees engaged in overtly racist acts. But some agents witnessed such acts and should have acted to stop them, Treasury officials said.

"We cannot enforce the law, fairly and with repute, unless law-enforcement officials demonstrate, in perception and reality, that their behavior is as free from bias as the fair administration of justice requires them to be," Rubin said in a statement.

The new rules against racist behavior take effect immediately for all Treasury agents except for unionized employees in the U.S. Customs Service, for whom it will be an issue in contract negotiations, the officials



said. Other Treasury agencies include the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Secret Service and the Internal Revenue Service.

The guidelines, recommended by a Treasury task force, call for stringent screening, including psychological testing, to avoid hiring agents who are emotionally unstable. A law-enforcement official said the rules raise questions about how much control a government agency can exercise over its employees' personal time.

"This is a very far-reaching . . . policy that's going to have some constitutional issues attached to it," Victor G. Oboyski, president of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, said in an interview. He said agents ""are going to be required to be politically correct" in their free time.

Rubin's action affecting the 31 Treasury agents is being taken under current department rules, said Ronald Noble, former Treasury undersecretary for enforcement who is a consultant to the department on the matter. Of the 31, 15 will be referred to their agencies for possible disciplinary action, and 16 will be referred for fact-finding inquiries or counseling. The most severe sanction could be dismissal.

Noble said the 15 were singled out for possible disciplinary action because they witnessed racist incidents and did not try to stop them. Seven of these 15 work for the ATF, one is with the Customs Service, one with the IRS, and six with the Secret Service.

The 16 others are believed not to have witnessed the acts but showed bad judgment by attending more than one Roundup, especially after 1989, he said. Of the 16, six are with the ATF, two with Customs, two with the IRS, four with the Secret Service, and two with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. No employees' names were released.

Noble also disclosed that of the 100 or so Treasury agents working on a federal investigation of recent fires at predominantly black Southern churches, two were among those being referred for disciplinary inquiries for their conduct at the Roundups and 10 others attended the Roundups but were not subject to referral.

## THE PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

Wednesday, April 3, 1996

### *T-men warned about racism*

by Marcy Gordon, Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin referred 31 agents for further inquiry or possible discipline yesterday for participating in "Good Ol' Boy Roundups" that included racist behavior.

At the same time, the Treasury Department barred its 19,500 law enforcement officers from attending future Roundups and adopted guidelines for officers' off-duty behavior.

Treasury officials, reacting to the fallout from the annual parties, said they are instituting rules to prohibit "off-duty manifestations of racial and other forms of bias."

The gatherings for law enforcement officers at a southeastern Tennessee campground, held for the last 16 years, turned in recent years into marathon drinking bouts where women feared for their safety and some participants engaged in racist conduct.

Reviews by inspectors general at the Treasury and the Justice departments found that 45 Justice employees and 120 to 200 Treasury workers attended the Roundups over the 16-year period.

The reviews found no evidence that the Treasury or Justice employees engaged in overtly racist acts. But some of the agents witnessed such acts and should have taken action to stop them, Treasury officials told reporters.

The new rules against racist behavior take effect immediately for all Treasury agents except for unionized employees in the U.S. Customs Service, the officials said. The other Treasury agencies include the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Secret Service and the Internal Revenue Service.

The guidelines, recommended by a Treasury task force, also include a stringent screening process, including psychological testing, to avoid hiring agents who are biased or emotionally unstable.

A law enforcement official said the rules raise questions about how much control a government agency can exercise over its employees' personal time.

"This is a very far-reaching . . . policy that's going to have some constitutional issues attached to it," Victor G. Oboyski, president of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, said in a telephone interview. He said agents "are going to be required to be politically correct" in their free time.

[Main](#)[Strange Things](#)

If you have any comments on the material in these Web pages or if you have a BATF incident to contribute, send email to [croaker@access.digex.net](mailto:croaker@access.digex.net)

Web page designed by WEPIN. Contact [dhenson@itsnet.com](mailto:dhenson@itsnet.com) for information on how WEPIN can help you design YOUR Web pages.